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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006810

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKISH TRUCKERS' STRIKE THREATENS SUPPLIES FOR IRAQ

Sensitive But Unclassified.

1. (SBU) Turkish truck drivers delivering sustainment supplies and refined products into Iraq called a wild cat strike December 7. It is not clear how widespread is the support for the strike among truckers. Officials from the Defense Energy Support Center (DESC) and one of its largest contractors -- Petrol Ofisi -- confirmed that loading of trucks has been affected and that striking truckers have threatened other drivers, in an effort to prevent them from loading their trucks.

2. (SBU) Petrol Ofisi Land Transport Coordinator Alper Peker reported that the strike initially was aimed at trucking companies working for Iraq Oil Company SOMO. However, Peker reported that the strike has spread to include loadings of all deliveries to Iraq, including deliveries of sustainment and humanitarian supplies under U.S. contract. The strikers are demanding a doubling of payments for deliveries. Strike leaders have circulated flyers with their demands -- see para

4. Most of the demands concern security and support for drivers in convoys, compensation for delays or losses, and complaints about harassment by Kurdish authorities in northern Iraq. It is not yet clear who organized the strike. A similar wild-cat strike in 2003 was organized by two large, family-owned trucking companies. That strike lasted 3 days; the strikers won significant increases in their payments.

3. (SBU) Comment: So far it does not appear that the strike has affected the flow of supplies across the Turkish border; the journey from the depots to the border takes a couple days. There does not appear to be any effort on the part of strikers to stop already loaded trucks from completing their deliveries. However, if the strikers can stop all loading at the Turkish depots, we expect the number of trucks crossing into Iraq will drop sharply in a few days. Based on past experience, a strike lasting more than 10 days or so could affect the supply situation for U.S. personnel and programs and the overall fuel situation in Iraq heading into winter.

4. (U) Text of truckers' grievances:

Attention to Our Driver Friends

1. Safety Coordination must be increased. Convoys are being attacked in an organized manner; our driver friends are being killed and burned. Loading of trucks should not take place without greater safety guarantee.

2. USA: Emergency (first aid) EMT teams are requested with convoys.

3. USA: Mechanics/engineers requested with convoys. With any small mechanical failure trucks are being left behind and burned.

4. Translators that know both English and Turkish are requested.

5. Insurance is requested for the trucks/drivers to compensate for losses sustained.

6. Terminals where fuel is emptied. Drivers are made to wait 15-20 days under danger. Request that drivers are paid to wait after 2 days.

7. At the terminals where fuel is emptied, duties/taxes/bribes are being asked for. If drivers don't pay, they are being told that their fuel is old. 1,000-2,000 liters of fuel being taken; needs to stop.

8. Drivers are being taxed at the Habur and Halil Abraham control site and suffering monetary losses. Needs to stop.

9. Tickets/traffic penalties are being issued at the above control site unnecessarily. Needs to stop.

10. The below adjustments need to be made to prices. See attached. (Note: Attachment not provided to us. End Note.)

Support if requested from all drivers.

End text.

15. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

EDELMAN